

Romans 8

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[0 : 00] Here, the testimonies of God's faithfulness in the lives of the congregation. I hope you've been encouraged by these testimonies. I know I have.

If you would, open your Bibles up to Romans chapter 8. We're going to be in Romans 8, 18 through 25 today. So in the last couple weeks now, we've been taking a break from our series in the book of Matthew to talk about something that every person on this planet is familiar with to some degree. And as we've said, at some point in life, will be almost certainly to a significant degree, and that is suffering. So as Matt said, we entitled this series, Every Tear and Trial Walking with Christ Through Suffering.

They don't minimize the reality of our suffering. They don't minimize the difficulty of it, but rather it confronts our suffering head on, right? God knows our trouble. God understands our heartache. We've considered how we can be reassured and resting in God's past faithfulness. And this is proven by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, and how we can find a present refuge and comfort in Him.

[1 : 13] God is with us. Amen? So we can go to Him honestly with our suffering. And as we see Him in His power, in His majesty, in His justice, we are comforted.

And so we respond with praise rather than despair. And that was last week. So we've looked so far at God's past and His present faithfulness, and today we're going to consider His future glory that awaits those who are His.

So like I said, we're going to be in Romans 8, 18 through 25. J.I. Packer, in his book, Knowing God, calls Romans the high peak of the Bible, and Romans 8 specifically, the high peak of Romans. So before we jump into the middle of this incredible chapter of God's holy inspired word, I think that a little context may be necessary. And Packer further helps with that.

This is from the book, Knowing God. He says this, So it's actually more profound than it at first seems.

[2 : 24] So listen to this. This is a summary of the book of Romans so far. For only if you have come to know yourself as a lost and helpless sinner, chapters 1 through 3, and with Abraham to trust the divine promise that seems too good to be true in your case, the promise of acceptance because Jesus, your covenant head, died and rose.

That's chapters 4 and 5. Only if, as a new creature in Christ, you have committed yourself to total holiness and then found in yourself that flesh that is at war with the Spirit so that you live in contradiction, never fully achieving the good you purposed, nor avoiding all the evil you renounced. Chapters 6 and 7. Only if, on top of this, losses and crosses are upon you, illness, strain, accident, shock, disappointment, unfair treatment, only then will Romans 8 yield up its full riches and make its great power known to you.

And Romans 8, he says, focuses on four gifts that all believers have in Christ. That is righteousness, the Holy Spirit, sonship, and security.

So we're jumping into the conversation today right here. I encourage you, though, especially if you've never been through the book of Romans, get into the book of Romans. It is a fantastic book.

[3 : 42] Our small group went through half of it last year, and it was just such an encouraging study, and I've been continuing to read through it. It's just so rich, so I encourage you there. The book of Romans is both deeply theological and also deeply practical.

And what Paul wants for believers is just what Packer said. It's to experience the riches of God. It's to experience the power of God. This isn't simply meant to bolster your knowledge, to give you more stuff in your head.

This is meant to transform your life. That's what this is meant to do. Some of you know, many of you know, but the beginning of 2017, it was a tough time because my father passed away quite unexpectedly.

He was a mailman. He walked five miles a day. He ran three to four times a week. He was, if any, for those that knew him, he was a very active person, always moving around, always doing something.

And he passed away from a heart attack in his mail truck. And so this passage in particular has become so much more valuable to me. The book of Romans has meant so much to me as our small group was going through it during 2017.

[4 : 52] And it's helped me to experience the things that I've known in my head for 30 years. It's helped me to come to know the comfort of the Spirit. It's helped me to come to understand the adoption that I have.

It's helped me to come to know, to a greater degree, the eternal glory that awaits us in heaven. And that's what we're going to talk about today. So Romans 8, 18 through 25, Paul says this.

For I consider, and it'll be up here on the screen, for I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the future glory that is to be revealed to us.

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now, and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

[6 : 05] For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

This is God's word. Heavenly Father, God, as we do every Sunday, we come before you in desperation because we, in and of ourselves, don't have an ability to hear these words and for them to go down into the level of our hearts, to transform us, God, to renew our minds.

We don't have that ability, so we are desperately dependent on you, Father. God, there are so many distractions in this world, whether it's suffering or pleasures, God. We know that both of these things will distract us from what is ultimately good, and we want to be free of those distractions, and we want to see you clearly, and we want to long righteously for our future inheritance with Christ, and let that transform, God, everything that we do.

So, Lord, we know that you're here, but we pray that you would work and move in power, Lord, that you would change our hearts and renew our minds this morning, God. We pray this in your name. Amen.

I'm just going to get some water here. So, we're going to jump right in here. Paul says in verse 18, For I consider.

[7 : 29] And whenever we see that, the word for, we know he's talking about something in the past. So, what Paul's doing here is connecting what he's about to say to what he just said. So, let's look at verses 16 and 17, actually.

Paul says, Now, who is Paul talking about in this passage?

All you've got to do is look back in your Bible. So, look at verse 1. He's talking about those who are in Christ Jesus, right? Those who are no longer condemned. Verse 2. It's those who have been set free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

Verse 9. It's those in whom the Spirit dwells. Paul is talking about the children of God. And for the children of God, he says two things are true.

We will suffer with Christ. He says it right here. And secondly, our present suffering with Christ will give way to future glory with Christ.

[8 : 37] Now, hold on, Paul. So, Paul, you were just talking about freedom from sin and no condemnation and having life in the Spirit.

So, why are we going to start talking about suffering? And that's because Paul is very familiar with the fact that in this world, as Jesus said, you will have tribulation. See, Paul's not about to portray the Christian life as glamorous when he's all too familiar with the pain and the suffering that it really brings.

Paul wants us to be realistic here. And so, in 2 Corinthians 11, Paul says this, Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. A night and a day I was adrift at sea. Unfrequent journeys in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers, in toil and hardship through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure, and apart from other things, there is a daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.

Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is made to fall and I am not indignant? So let's not think Paul has some pie-in-the-sky idea. Paul experienced suffering to a great degree.

[9 : 57] So we need to consider that as we read what he says. So Paul knows life is difficult, but he also knows the truth of the rest of what Jesus said in that verse. In this world you will have tribulation, but take heart.

I have overcome the world. See, Paul wants us to take heart in the midst of our suffering, and he wants us to know just why we can do that. So having now established that as children of God, we will suffer and we will be glorified, he knows that our tendency is to compare the two. Right? We do this all the time with all sorts of things. We call it a cost-benefit analysis. Right? You know, we say something like this, if I run three times a week, then I'll be healthier and I'll be happier and I might live longer.

Is the benefit worth the pain? Right? I guess functionally I've decided no, it's not. I feel like it. Tyler doesn't like to run either. If I give up, here's another thing, if I give up, you know, going out to eat and I choose to buy a refurbished Droid probably instead of the iPhone X, right, then I can save enough money to take a nice vacation in a year, right?

Is the pain, is the loss, is it worth the benefit? And Paul answers that for us. He says, let me save you the trouble of thinking through this.

[11 : 14] He says, I've compared the two, I've measured them against one another, I've weighed them both and they're not worth comparing, right? Look at verse 18. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed.

Future glory is going to be so out of this world awesome that it would be foolish to ask, do you think it will be worth the pain and the suffering? And this brings us to our first point today.

Eternity's glory dwarfs today's suffering. Eternity's glory dwarfs today's suffering. So, two questions arise. What are the sufferings of this present time, right?

And then, what is the glory to be revealed to us? Notice first, who it is that experiences the sufferings of this present time.

Look at verses 19, 20, and 21, which is on the screen there. Who is it that experiences it? It's all creation. The creation waits. The creation was subjected. The whole creation has been groaning together.

[12 : 21] It's all creation. So this is our first clue in what Paul's talking about. But here's one thing to take from that. Listen to this. you're not alone in your suffering, right?

Historically, universally, the creation has experienced and will continue to experience suffering.

You're not a sole sufferer in this world. You're not the first one and you won't be the last one to go through pain.

You're not being singled out. See, all of us live in between the was subjected, that's in verse 20, and the will be set free, which is verse 21.

So this does not minimize our suffering, but it excludes the response of, God, why me? Why me?

Now, sometimes we have those honest questions and like we've already talked in the past, it's good to bring that before the Lord, but he doesn't want you to stay in that place where you're saying, why me?

So you're not alone in your suffering. So what kind of suffering is Paul talking about? That's what we're trying to get to and I see four indications from this text. We're going to go in backwards order here.

[13 : 29] Verse 22, pain. Suffering involves pain. Verse 21, suffering is bondage to corruption. Verse 20, suffering is futility. And also in verse 20, it says that creation was subjected.

It's something that creation was subjected to and this is actually hugely important because so far in our series, we haven't defined why suffering exists. And see, Paul is drawing our attention here

back to the beginning, back to Genesis chapter 3.

So if you would, flipping your Bibles to Genesis chapter 3. It's not going to be on the screen so you've got to turn there. So let's hear those pages flipping. Genesis chapter 3, verses 17 through 19, after Adam and Eve sinned.

And to Adam he said, this is God speaking, because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, you shall not eat of it. Cursed is the ground because of you.

In pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground.

[14 : 43] For out of it you were taken, for you are dust, and to dust you shall return. See, a curse was put upon man and extended then to all creation.

And notice this, the curse was not a natural consequence. The curse was actually a divine decree. It was a divine decree from God in response to sin. So there is suffering, therefore, because God is holy and man is sinful.

God's righteousness shone forth in this passage actually as he responded justly to sin with punishment, with the curse. Now, as we're going to talk about later, this was also an act of grace because he subjected it, what is it saying in Romans 8?

He subjected it in hope. We're going to talk about that later. So this curse divinely decreed by God because of the Son of Man subjected the world to futility, to pain and thorns and thistles and sweat and death.

See, futility means pointlessness, uselessness, ineffectiveness, emptiness, vanity, meaninglessness, failing to accomplish unintended purpose.

[15 : 53] And this word that we see here is the same word used all throughout Ecclesiastes, talking about the vanity of chasing after things of this world which are here today and gone tomorrow. And this principle of futility, it's readily seen in the world around us, right?

And we see this all the time. It pervades our entire universe. We call it the law of increasing entropy, right? This is the second law of thermodynamics at work. The whole universe operates under this principle, one of continual death and continual decay, increasing chaos, increasing disorder.

It is undeniable. So when Paul considers the sufferings of this present time, I think he has an extremely broad view here. As broad as the curse of God upon mankind and the world because of sin.

So suffering then by this definition is really, in this passage, it's anything resulting from the fall. Suffering is anything resulting from the fall. We've had examples in the testimonies of suffering within Shoreline and I just spend time brainstorming what are things that we've experienced in this church.

So this list here, things that most of the things people here at Shoreline have actually struggled with. Death of loved ones, cancer, chronic diseases, other health problems, financial hardship and unemployment, the pains of pregnancy and childbirth, postpartum depression, sleep deprivation, a.k.a. being a mom, negative effects of nature like freezing pipes that cause leakage in a house, separation from family, whether for just a time on deployment or being stationed somewhere else or on travel or permanent separation, having to give up a foster child or having an estranged family member, ridicule or mistreatment for being a Christian, whether from coworkers or family and the public in general, relational conflict, difficulties of parenting, loneliness and insecurity from singleness, abuse, whether sexual, physical or verbal.

[18 : 03] And we could go on, right? We could go on and on and on and on about the suffering that we see in this world, but I think that all these things are in view here when Paul refers to the sufferings of this present time.

All humanity, even all of creation, experienced this. And according to Paul, though the suffering is awful, and he does not diminish that, though the suffering is awful, yet the future glory that awaits God's children is incomparably greater.

So what is this future glory? And again, I think we can understand what Paul means by this right from within this text. So if you go to the next slide, Matt, the first thing, verse 21, future glory is freedom.

It says that creation longs to be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. But I thought we were already free, right? We're already free in

Christ.

Paul just said that earlier in the same chapter. We're already free from sin and death. He just said that. He spent a lot of time telling us this. Yes, in Christ, we are free from the power of sin and death.

[19 : 13] We no longer have to serve sin as our master, but we all know, as Paul wrestled with in chapter 7, the ongoing struggle with sin. We're all familiar with it. And we all experience the ongoing present realities of the curse, right?

We all experience these things. I just listed a whole bunch of them. We continue to experience pain, right? We continue to experience corruption and futility, but someday we will be finally and fully free from all of that.

Revelation 21, 4 says, He will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore for the former things have passed away.

Future glory is freedom. Future glory, secondly, is adoption. Verses 19, we see it there.

For the creation waits for the sons of God to be revealed. Verse 23, And we groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons. But wait, I thought we were already adopted. Again, Paul just told us the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are children of God.

[20 : 22] And yes, again, we are adopted, right? In Christ, we belong to the family of God. But it's kind of like the paperwork has been signed, right? We know that we're in the family of God, but we're not in his presence yet.

We don't experience the fullness that comes with adoption. In the future, that won't be the case anymore, right? We will fully and forever enjoy the blessings of being children of God.

In perfect relationship with him and perfect relationship with all of God's children. Revelation 21, 3 says this, And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man.

He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will be with them as their God.

Future glory is freedom. Future glory is adoption.

Future glory is redemption. Look at verse 23. We groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. Wait, but I thought we were already redeemed.

[21 : 27] Why were we looking forward to redemption? Ephesians 1, 7 says that we have redemption through the blood of Christ. That's past tense. And again, yes, we are already redeemed.

But we aren't fully redeemed. And we know this. Specifically here, Paul is talking about the redemption of our bodies. See, the biblical view of redemption is holistic. It involves the whole being, body and soul.

So the future glory that awaits us will involve these imperfect, ever-failing bodies being transformed into glorious, everlasting bodies. One commentator said this, In the world of glory, the total man will be saved.

But his body will no longer be the victim of decay and the instrument of sin. It will be a spiritual body fit for the life of a spiritual man. 1 Corinthians 15, one of the greatest chapters on resurrection, Paul said, For the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

[22 : 46] Oh death, where is your victory? Oh death, where is your sting? Future glory is redemption. So this eternal glory that awaits us, freedom from futility, adoption as God's children, glorified bodies, this is incomparable to the suffering that we experience today.

That's what Paul is trying to say here. Eternal glory dwarfs today's suffering. And I'm asking you to consider here, do you believe that? Do you know that? Not just in your head but at a heart level. Does your spirit within you see the glorious contrast between our present temporary sufferings and our future inheritance with Christ? See, if so, then your heart's response is that you've grown in hope for eternity's glory.

You've grown in hope. And that's our next point today. Today's sufferers groan in hope for eternity's glory. See, first we see that creation seems to see and believe this principle.

Creation seems to understand that eternity's glory dwarfs today's suffering. And how do we know this? On the slide, verses 19 through 22. Let me reread this for us.

[24 : 00] For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. So we know creation is waiting with eager longing for this redemption to take place.

It looks forward with hope to the time when it will be set free from all this bondage and corruption. Creation groans for it. See, God subjected the world to futility, but he did so in hope.

Calvin said, God has given to everything its charge, and he has not only by a distinct order commanded what he would to be done, but also implanted inwardly the hope of renovation.

For in the sad disorder which followed the fall of Adam, the whole machinery of the world would have instantly become deranged, and all its parts would have failed had not some hidden strength supported them.

[25 : 10] Now, I feel like we can catch this hope of renovation, as Calvin calls it, from creation when we just, you know, observe the world around us. It seems to cry out for freedom.

There's this big tree that's in our front yard, and it's kind of like, it's got some sort of disease because there's stuff all over the branches, and we've got branches coming down every once in a while, and I'm sitting in my desk, and I can see the tree this whole time I'm preparing for my sermon, and I felt like it was talking to me.

It's like saying, I'm tired of losing limbs. Like, I just want to keep my limbs, you know? I'm tired of this disease crawling all over. I want to be free from this. I could be so much greater if I was free from all this, right?

You know, the trees want freedom from disease and from wildfires, and the flowers long for the right mixture of sun and rain, and the ocean longs for order rather than chaos.

You know, the chaos of hurricanes and tsunamis, and even the animals, they long for peace and tranquility, right? Creation's magnificent beauty is tainted with sin. It's tainted with futility, and we see it, but it ever perseveres through it all, right?

[26 : 17] In this longing for freedom, this hope of a glorious future. Now, Paul uses such a fitting analogy in verse 22 that it almost needs no explanation, especially in this church.

You know, a mother suffers mightily through pregnancy and childbirth, yet she suffers in the hope of what's to come, right? Her child. So she suffers through it patiently, eagerly, persevering through the pain, right?

And so creation suffers through all the vanity, all the futility, all the corruption, but it does so in the hope of what's to come, freedom from all of it, freedom into the glory of God.

And actually, what does it say there in verse 21? The freedom of the glory of the children of God, right? Creation's destiny is actually, it's bound up with humanity.

It was affected by the curse that humanity provoked, got thrown into that mix, but it's also now included in the future renovation that God's children are going to receive.

[27 : 24] And so we see that creation groans in hope, but also God's children groan in hope for eternity's glory. Verse 23, and not only the creation, but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the Spirit groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

See, with this same groaning, with this same hope, we long for redemption. And again, who is Paul talking about? He's talking about Christians, even Christians grown in their present suffering.

And actually, better stated, especially Christians grown in their present suffering. Now, why is that? Because he says here that Christians are those who have the first fruits of the Spirit. What in the world are the first fruits of the Spirit?

It's all the blessings, it's all the benefits that we have in Christ, all the things that we experience as children of God here and now, right? It's having a right standing with God because of the blood of Jesus.

It's having access to our Heavenly Father. It's being indwelt and empowered by the Spirit. It's having our hearts flooded with love and joy and peace. It's being given supernatural wisdom and discernment.

[28 : 35] It's having victory over sin. See, these things are ours in Christ today. Amen? Let me try that one again. Amen. These things, freedom from sin, access to God, indwelling of the Spirit, our hearts flooded with love and joy and peace, supernatural wisdom, these things are ours in Christ today.

Amen? Amen. We've tasted and we've seen and so we long for more. Right? We've experienced adoption but we want the fullness of it.

We experience freedom from sin and we want the fullness of it. We've experienced restoration but we want the fullness of it. Right? We groan in our present suffering knowing that future glory awaits. Church, eternity's glory dwarfs today's suffering and so today's sufferers groan in hope for eternity's glory. Do you groan for eternity's glory?

Do you long to experience the fullness of redemption? Do you fervently desire the completion of the work that God started in you? See, if you do, it's probably because you have at least begun to understand not just in your head but in your heart that eternity's glory far outweighs today's suffering.

[29 : 59] And if you don't, it's probably because you haven't begun to understand just how grand and how glorious and how amazing it's going to be. Right? It's probably because you don't understand that it's incomparably greater than anything we can experience in this life.

Or you've been distracted from it. Right? Or you've diverted your gaze and your perspective is thrown off. If you're in that place where your glorious future in Christ is not in view.

Right? Or if it appears to be not that much better than the things we experience in this world, then very likely the present sufferings you're facing are magnified.

It's like that you have a distorted view that's multiplying your pain and your grief. Instead of the groaning Paul's talking about, you offer up despairing groans.

You offer up groans totally devoid of hope. Now if you're not in a place of significant suffering and you don't long for this future glory, it's likely that the pleasures of this world are magnified.

[31 : 04] Right? You have a distorted view that the results in worldly pleasures capturing your heart more than pleasures of God. In November, I had the benefit of going out to California.

My brother-in-law and I went hiking in the Sierra Nevadas and they're very big mountains. They make the little mountains up here look very small. So we're driving up California Route 395 and they're far off in the distance and as we get closer, you know, the foothills start coming into view and so I'm staring up at Mount Whitney which is the tallest mountain in the continental United States like 14,500 feet.

I'm staring at Mount Whitney and I'm looking at the foothills and I'm thinking how in the world is that 14,000 feet? It actually looks kind of small. Like we're only at 3,000 feet. It's 11,000 feet above us like towering over us and with the foothills right there it actually made Mount Whitney look small and my perspective was distorted, right?

Like I didn't understand what I was looking at. My brain couldn't imagine what I was seeing. The foothills had become magnified in my mind so I could no longer discern the actual size and as we're driving through these foothills there were tons of cars everywhere.

There was this thing called the Alabama foothills in California. I don't quite understand but it actually looked kind of cool. Like I was almost tempted to stop and go play on the foothills because it seemed cool and we didn't thankfully.

[32 : 40] We went up and we had I mean it was incredible experience backpacking. We didn't go up Mount Whitney but another mountain up there and when we came back down and I was driving through the foot I was like this is stupid.

Like why are people doing this? There's a giant mountain that awaits like glory eternal paradise up there and they're playing around down here in the foothills. So what's the lesson here?

And I thought about this for a long time and I came up with this really profound statement. Step back and look up. Step back and look up.

This talk about longing for eternity's glory doesn't strike a chord in your heart. Your perspective is skewed. You need to step back and you need to look up because guess what?

You can't actually will hopeful groaning. You can't do it. You can't will in your heart a longing for redemption. Hope is something that's wrought about in your heart by the Holy Spirit as you take a step back from the present sufferings or pleasures and you set your mind on things that are above.

[33 : 49] It's Colossians 3.2. Paul actually mentioned this idea a few chapters earlier if you flip back to Romans 5. Romans 5.1-5 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance and endurance produces character and character produces hope.

And hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. What he's saying here is that hope not only carries us through suffering, hope is actually forged in the fires of suffering.

And it happens as we're compelled to consider God's great love toward us, right, which includes our future glory, includes our future inheritance with Christ. And the Spirit in our hearts is the guarantee that this will come to pass.

Because of this, we not only rejoice in the hope of glory, what does he say there? We rejoice in our suffering, we rejoice in our sufferings. And what else is forged in the fires of suffering?

[35 : 14] Why would we rejoice in our sufferings? He says endurance and character. In other words, and really this could be a whole other sermon, but it bears mentioning right now, God wants to and will use your suffering, big or small, to sanctify you, right, to make you more like Jesus.

That's his will for your life. Romans 8, 29, a little bit later in the chapter, he says that God has predestined you for what? To be conformed into the image of his Son.

And that means that you actually rejoice in your sufferings because of what it's doing for you, what it's accomplishing in you, sanctification. Another great passage is James 1, 2 through 4, consider it all joy, my brothers, when you face trials.

So when the fires of suffering, the Holy Spirit is forging character, he's forging hope in our hearts. In one more passage, Ephesians 1, 13 and 14, in him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

He's looking back at conversion, actually. You heard the word, you believe the word, you were sealed with the Spirit, right, giving you that hope. So the hope of future redemption, it isn't actually a new thing to believers at any stage, right?

[36 : 46] It's actually the hope into which we were saved. So back in Romans 8, look at verse 24, Paul says this, for in this hope we were saved, right?

The hope of redemption is the hope of every believer. See, when you first came to Christ by faith, you for the first time, you stepped back and you looked up and you were able to see clearly, you believe that God loves you, you believe that he sent Christ to die for you and rescue you from sin, and you believe that one day redemption that is yours now in part would be completed.

And so then you began to hope, right? You began to hope in God and hope in the things that he's promised. See, faith and hope go together.

Matthew Henry said that faith is the mother of hope. In Hebrews 11, faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

See, by faith and in hope, Christians start their walk in Christ, right? We come to faith in Christ and we have this new hope in us.

[37 : 53] And so by faith and in hope, it must continue on. And that's exactly why we need to continually step back and look up, right? We need to continue to catch a fresh vision of God's past and present and future faithfulness to us, right?

And we need to let that flood our hearts in hope that carries us through the suffering and the trials and gives us joy even in the midst of them. So the action, it's actually the same as it was last week, right?

Stepping back and looking up, it looks like being still before the Lord. It looks like beholding the works of the Lord, except this week we're talking about the future works of the Lord, right?

So when either the foothills of suffering or the foothills of pleasure are all you can see, you've got to retreat from them. You've got to go to a place that's free from distractions and get your mind into the throne room of God, right?

And get your eyes onto the word and in that situation the spirit in the quiet will flood your heart. He'll flood your heart with assurance of the glory that's to come, of the life that's to come.

[39 : 04] So it's this spirit wrought perspective that enables Christians to wait eagerly in patience until our faith and hope become sight and become reality.

That's the last part of this passage. Paul says we've grown inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, right? In this hope we are saved, hope that is seen is not hope, right?

We're hoping for something that's to come and when we get there we actually won't need to hope anymore because everything will be in front of us. We won't need to hope. See the waiting eagerly in patience is not really the application.

It's the test. The test for whether or not you are filled with the hope of heaven is whether or not you are waiting eagerly with patience. So I commend you once again step back and look up, right?

Behold the works of the Lord. Be still before the Lord. Let the spirit fill you with hope that enables you to wait eagerly with patience, that enables you to persevere through your present sufferings.

[40 : 12] Christ. Now if you're not a believer this morning you may be thinking that this only confirms your criticism of Christianity, right? That it's just a crutch.

Christianity is just a crutch for the weak. It's just a coping mechanism. And my response to that is, yes it is. Christianity is a crutch. I'm crippled and I need a crutch.

I'm dead and I actually, I need new life. Yes it is a coping mechanism. To cope actually means to deal effectively with something. I have a problem that needs dealing with.

I have sin in my heart and if it's not solved I'm going to spend an eternity paying the punishment for it. And the only way to deal effectively with it is to go to Christ who's already paid for it on the cross.

Crutches and coping, though often carrying a negative connotation, are just practical ways of dealing with something. Dealing with the reality of a situation. See, Christianity, it looks head on at suffering.

[41 : 14] It looks head on at the brokenness and pain of this world and very practically it says we need a savior. Jesus is that savior. C.S.

Lewis called pain the megaphone of God, saying that God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain. It's his megaphone to arouse a deaf world.

See, God could have destroyed the world when mankind sinned. He would have actually been just to do that. He could have ended it all right there, but out of his love and his grace, instead, he subjected the world to a curse that beckons us to return to him.

Philip Yancey in his book, *Where is God When it Hurts*, says, sometimes murmuring, sometimes shouting, suffer is a rumor of transcendence, that the entire human condition is out of whack.

Something is wrong with the life of war and violence and human tragedy. He who wants to be satisfied with this world, who wants to believe the only purpose of life is enjoyment, must go around with cotton in his ears, for the megaphone of pain is a loud one.

[42 : 19] He says later that the Christian concept of a great but fallen world matches what we know of reality. It fits the dual nature of this world and of us.

So if you're in that place where you think this life is all there is and that Christianity is just a crutch or coping mechanism, I pray that your eyes and your ears would be open today to the reality of your brokenness and the reality that redemption has been purchased for you.

Right? Christ loved you to so great a degree that he left the comforts of heaven to die on the cross for you and that redemption means an eternity in perfect relationship with God and all his children with a glorified body and a glorified creation.

And that redemption breaks into this life as we experience the first fruits of it. I was talking with Matt Hartung on Friday and he was talking about how his son Sammy started eating grilled chicken and rice for the first time.

And the very first time he was given the grilled chicken and rice he was kind of like, what is this?

And then he got a smile on his face and went, he just wanted more of it, right?

[43 : 32] And we were talking, I imagine that our lives in heaven are going to be like that. We're going to have that experience all the time. Like, what is this new thing?

This is awesome, I want more of it. And that's going to happen forever, right? It's going to be amazing. We are ever going to be beholding the glorious perfection of God.

We are ever going to be experiencing to the fullest the love and the joy and the peace and the security of being his child. We are ever going to be laughing and smiling and perfect fellowship with others, ever going to be experiencing new adventures and exploring a perfect creation with perfect bodies.

And like a baby that can't even imagine what grilled chicken and rice tastes like, we can hardly begin to imagine how glorious and how all satisfying eternity with God and his saints is going to be. So we believe with Paul. We believe that our present sufferings aren't even worth comparing to future glory and we long with the patriarchs of old for a better heavenly country whose designer and builder is God.

[44 : 42] And in this hope for which we groan, the Holy Spirit empowers us to patiently, even joyfully endure the sufferings of this present time. Please pray with me.

Heavenly Father, you want to do a work in our hearts, God. You want to fill us with the hope of eternal glory. God, you have given us the first fruits. You've let us taste and see your goodness. And God, we want more. And God, in the times that we don't want more, God, I pray that you would get our eyes off the foothills of our suffering and off the foothills of pleasure in this world, God, so that we can see you for who you are, so that we can behold the works that you're doing, God, presently and in the past and the works that you're doing in the future, Lord, and let that flood our hearts, with hope, Father, hope that carries us, hope that gives us patient endurance, hope that builds character, God.

That's what we long for, all for your glory. Father, we pray this all in your matchless name. Amen.

So we're going to move into a time of communion.

communion. Now, typically, we have a lot of communion. Now, typically, we have a lot of